

MARYLAND DEFENSE FORCE JOINS NATIONAL GUARD FOR MAJOR HOMELAND SECURITY/TERRORIST RESPONSE EXERCISE

Lieutenant Colonel (MD) Robert Hastings
Major Kristine Henry, MDARNG

The Maryland Defense Force (MDDF) joined the National Guard (NG) for Exercise Vigilant Guard, a major homeland security/terrorist response exercise held in Maryland, Virginia and Washington, DC, during the week ending 7 September, 2007 (Maryland Army National Guard press release, 2007; Maryland Defense Force press release, 2007). Vigilant Guard is a National Guard Bureau sponsored series of national and regional exercises (Maryland National Guard Joint Force Headquarters, 2007) designed to enhance the preparedness of National Guard forces in performing their role as the first military responder in all domestic emergencies.

The State of Maryland's military participation in Vigilant Guard involved the Maryland NG Joint Force Headquarters (JFHQs), Maryland Joint Task Force (JTF) and operational units from all four agencies of the Maryland Military Department; the Maryland Army National Guard (MDARNG), the Maryland Air National Guard (MDANG), the Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), and the MDDF.

Participating agencies also included the Virginia NG and Department of Emergency Management, the District of Columbia NG and Emergency Management Agency; Joint Force Headquarters - National Capital Region; elements of the North Carolina NG; and county and municipal first responders from across the three jurisdictions.

The exercise followed a simulated terrorist attack scenario which unfolded over the course of the three-day exercise. The first two days were played out on computer screens and communication equipment in the CPX at the Joint Operations Center at Camp Fretterd Military Reservation in Reisterstown, Maryland, primarily testing the Maryland NG's ability to coordinate and interoperate with other state and local agencies.

Using simulated reports – “notional injects” in exercise parlance – from a variety of sources, the scenario unfolded. First a truck bomb collapsed a span of the Woodrow Wilson Bridge during rush hour traffic. Next, a bomb exploded on a rail line, derailing a train near the Baltimore-Washington International Airport. As public concern spread, traffic approached gridlock and telephone lines became overwhelmed. Suspected terrorists next fired an anti-tank rocket at a train in downtown Baltimore, followed by a shoot-out with city police who found a suspicious white powder in their vehicle near the M&T Bank Stadium.

MDDF provided personnel from its 10th Medical Regiment as well as legal, chaplain, operations, communications, and public affairs personnel from its mission oriented units. Brigadier General (MD) Courtney Wilson, Commanding General, MDDF, observed

“MDDF personnel participated in both the command post exercise (CPX) and the deployment of the NG Initial Response Force. This exercise allowed us to practice in a simulated environment many of the operational and coordination skills we would need

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to use in event of a real-world emergency. The experience of working with the NG and other emergency management personnel will no doubt prove very useful in the future regardless of the scenario. Everyone put forth an outstanding effort this week. Marylanders have every right to be proud of their state military forces, including both the NG and the MDDF, as well as the family members and employers who support them and provide them time away from work for training like this,” (Wilson, 2007).

Most MDDF participants were employed as staff officers in the CPX working side-by-side with their NG and MEMA counterparts to provide assistance and expertise to the JTF commander and operations officer.

MDDF medical officers assisted in planning for the employment of medical units and personnel in response to the training scenarios, analyzing medical intelligence and conducting mission analysis to determine how to deploy medical assets and when to call up additional medical capabilities. Lieutenant Colonel (MD) James Doyle, Deputy Commander for Medical Services of the 10th Medical Regiment, who worked at the JTF command post during the exercise, stated that

“Working with our NG counterparts was invaluable. Providing surge medical capability in event of an emergency is the 10th Medical Regiment’s primary mission which we prepare for on a regular basis. The command post aspect is new for us, and we’re more prepared and confident today because of this exercise” (Doyle, 2007).

Communications personnel from MDDF helped manage the NG’s Joint Incident Site Communications Capability (JISCC) system, a rapidly deployable communications package that provides the infrastructure for high-speed communications for the incident commander, with the ability to link local, state and federal communication systems to maximize interoperability and facilitate information sharing. MDDF personnel also augmented the JTF communications staff, conducting situation briefs, solving communications problems, and responding to requests for information.

Sgt. 1st Class (MD) Evan Creasy, an operations noncommissioned officer worked as a military liaison,

Coordinating military requirements, missions, and information with various civil emergency agencies was another MDDF assignment, “We managed requests for military assets from the civil agencies, conducted situation analysis, and tasked missions to our various military assets” (Creasy, 2007).

Another of MDDF’s core missions exercised during the CPX was to provide experienced legal personnel to augment the National Guard’s legal resources. Major (MD) Laurie Kwiedorowicz said that “Participation in the Vigilant Guard Exercise gave me an operational perspective on the value and utility of having on-site legal support during any type of response. The exercise gave me valuable knowledge on the roles and responsibilities of a legal counsel during response exercises.”

As the simulated scenario continued and local responders became overwhelmed, the situation became serious enough to require military assistance, and Maryland Governor Martin O’Malley called out the NG. The third day of events was no longer just notional; it was full of action as NG troops, Baltimore City Police Department, Baltimore City Fire Department, and other local first responders swung into action and actually implemented their response in downtown Baltimore.

Maryland NG UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters landed in a parking lot near the Baltimore Orioles Stadium to disperse soldiers from the 115th Military Police Battalion's Initial Reaction Force. Soon the Guardsman had assessed the situation and deployed their forces, setting up checkpoints and patrolling the streets. Soldiers and Airmen of 32nd Civil Support Team, who specialize in detecting nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons, donned blue HAZMAT suits and attempted to analyze materials at the scene.

As the military police and HAZMAT teams worked to contain the situation, members of the 29th Mobile Public Affairs Detachment (MPAD) and the 175th Wing Public Affairs Office formed a Joint Media Operations Center to respond to reporters' questions and increase the flow of information to a worried public. One of the authors, Lieutenant Colonel (MD) Robert Hastings, worked with the 29th MPAD, escorting real-world embedded news media who flew with the Initial Reaction Force aboard UH-60 helicopters to the simulated incident site in downtown Baltimore. By assisting with the real-world media mission, more NG public affairs personnel were able to participate in the training. "This is why I joined the Defense Force, to continue to use the skills I learned in the Army and in business to help keep America safe." (Hastings, 2007).

Vigilant Guard validated, for the first time in a homeland security scenario, MDDF's mission-oriented concept of operations, which was implemented following the end of the cold war era (Smalkin, n.d.). No longer structured with standing units organized to operate independently, MDDF's mission-oriented units today are organized to plug directly into NG units, augmenting their capabilities with skilled professionals who have trained and in some cases deployed alongside their NG counterparts (Tuxil, 2006; Smalkin, 2006). In September 2005, more than 200 MDDF medical personnel, along with command and support staff, deployed to Jefferson Parish, Louisiana in relief efforts following Hurricane Katrina, providing medical treatment for more than 7,000 citizens (Colgan et al., 2006).

MDDF medical personnel also joined the 175th Medical Group on its humanitarian medical mission to Bosnia-Herzegovina in July 2006, marking the first deployment of the MDDF outside the United States. In that mission, the joint MDANG-MDDF team treated more than 2000 people in 17 remote villages across the country. Recently, MDDF medical personnel supplemented the 175th Medical Group once again on a medical humanitarian mission to the Rosebud Sioux Indian reservation in South Dakota. The 10th Medical Regiment is certified as a Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) and can be designated as the MDDF-MRC (Nelson et al., 2006)

The MDDF is one of a number of State Defense Force units (Divisions, Brigades or Battalions, depending on their size and their Adjutant General) authorized by Congress under Title 32, paragraph 109 and their respective state legislatures. While specific missions vary from state to state, SDF units exist primarily to augment the capabilities of their NG. Employing unpaid volunteers who bring military experience and/or civilian professional skills, they supplement the capabilities of the NG, assist in NG mobilization for federal service, replace NG assets deployed out-of-state, and support state homeland security missions. SDF units operate under the command of the Governor, as state Commander-in-Chief, and fall under the operational control of the state Adjutant General's office. SDF units receive no federal funds and are supported entirely by the state.

Headquartered at the Pikesville Military Reservation in Baltimore, the MDDF is a volunteer uniformed state military agency organized under the Maryland Military Department. Formally established by the Maryland legislature in 1917, the unit's heritage and traditions trace back to the 17th

century. Its mission is to provide competent supplemental professional and technical support to the Maryland Military Department and the Maryland NG¹.

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¹ For further information about the Maryland Defense Force, visit www.mddefenseforce.org .